

**DEVELOPING A PRE-INCIDENT SURVEY FOR THE EAST NAPLES
FIRE CONTROL AND RESCUE DISTRICT**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

BY: Rob Potteiger, Assistant Chief
East Naples Fire Control and Rescue District
Naples, Florida

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ABSTRACT

The heavy workload of the Fire Prevention Bureau did not allow for the inspections of multi-family dwellings to be made within the East Naples Fire Control and Rescue District (ENFC&RD). The lack of information such as, locating fire department connections and addresses, recognizing buildings with sprinkler and standpipes created problems for suppression personnel when responding to medical calls and fire related incidents. The need arose for a plan to gather this much-needed information, and still be able to utilize personnel within the department. The East Naples Fire Control and Rescue District (ENFC&RD) presently has no formal procedure that allows suppression personnel to perform multi-family dwelling inspections.

The following questions were used to gather and evaluate the research data needed:

- 1) What is the criterion on multi-family structures to be included in the survey?
- 2) What are liked sized adjacent departments doing in terms of a survey for multi-family structures?
- 3) What are the ramifications of not using a survey?

An action research methodology, supported by historical research was applied to the actual, real-life problem of not having a survey for multi-family structures. A total of 15 departments were polled, only to find out that 10 departments used an inspection form or pre-fire plan, however none used any form of a survey. All departments polled did however utilize fire prevention divisions and engine companies to perform all annual inspections. A meeting was held to develop a plan that allowed the use of personnel within the suppression division to conduct these surveys.

After several questions and concerns were voiced within the suppression division, it was determined that the form must be simple and non-lengthy. Elements of the survey would include common fire safety components such as fire protection systems and storage practices. It was

recommended that before implementing the survey program, a 24-hour fire inspector class would be implemented and taught to all suppression personnel who would now have the added responsibility of conducting these pre-incident surveys. Training would focus on building construction, alarm functions, occupancy and its hazards, the type of construction, and storage practices.

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INTRODUCTION

As the fire service evolves into the 21st century, it has become apparent that multi-family dwelling inspections conducted by fire departments needs to evolve too. Company inspections are usually viewed as "busy" work and not the priority of rank and file firefighters. This research project focuses on the problem, that at present, the East Naples Fire Control and Rescue District (ENFC&RD) has no formal procedure for suppression personnel to perform multi-family dwelling inspections.

The purpose of this research paper is to develop a survey to be used on multi-family structures by suppression personnel. This project employed an action research methodology, supported by a historical research. The following questions were used to gather and evaluate the research data needed:

- 1) What is the criterion on multi-family structures to be included in the survey?
- 2) What are liked sized adjacent departments doing in terms of a survey for multi-family structures?
- 3) What are the ramifications of not using a survey?

BACKGROUND

The workday of a firefighter is taken up with many tasks. These include apparatus maintenance, building maintenance, training in all aspects of fire fighting, medical training, and community relations. ENFC&RD is no different. ENFC&RD's response area encompass 156 square miles with three stations, to serve the 56,000 residence (Collier County Tax Collector, 1998). There are 12,423 multi-family structures of more than four units each in ENFC&RD response area (Collier County Planning Department, 1998). Naples rests on the Gulf of Mexico,

and with the tropical climate, it is no wonder it is one of the fastest growing communities in the country (Caputo, 1997).

In 1997, ENFC&RD responded to over 5300 alarms for assistance with approximately 68% medical and 32% fire related (Division of State Fire Marshal, 1998). The department is divided into two operational divisions, suppression, and prevention-education. Suppression consists of 54 certified firefighters divided into three platoons. Prevention-education consists of four certified inspectors responsible for all new construction, plan review, burn permits for land clearing, fire safety education, and inspections of all existing multi-family and commercial buildings. Although these inspectors are needed and utilized to their furthest potential, their workload prohibited the gathering of vital information needed by suppression personnel. With the call load ever increasing on operations side, it became apparent by response times increasing, and some of the radio traffic looking for addresses (Collier County Sheriff's Office, 1998), that a problem was developing. In early 1998, the author scheduled a meeting with the fire marshal and the suppression division captains. The purpose of this meeting was to see how suppression could help prevention enforce some of the fire codes. The assemblage focused on the problems operations was having, such as locating fire department connections and addresses, recognizing buildings with sprinkler and standpipes (Division of State Fire Marshal, 1998), and fire alarms that were not being properly tagged for inspection. It was decided by consensus that prevention would not be able to supply suppression with this information because of their already heavy workload. Further discussion was that suppression personnel would benefit from the on site inspections. In addition, discussion revealed that the likely candidates for accomplishing these goals would be suppression personnel.

After a planning session was scheduled, it was decided that a survey for multi-family structures of two stories or greater would be developed. By identifying and recording these findings

on a survey of multi-family dwellings, owners, as well as fire department personnel, will have a better understanding of each other's duties and responsibilities. The process for consensus into this survey came largely from material taught at the National Fire Academy (NFA).

Critical factors in developing this research project relate to course material found in the Executive Fire Officer Programs (EFOP), *Strategic Management of Change*, (1996). The process utilized by the author in reaching consensus is described in the manual for the National Fire Academy's *Strategic Management of Change* as follows (National Fire Academy [NFA], 1996):

Planning is the phase in which the information gathered during analysis is used to formulate a plan designed to bring about the desired change. The goal of planning is to translate the change requirements into detailed, strategically sound plans to accomplish the desired change (p.sm 2-6).

LITERARY REVIEW

Like most tragedies in communities it usually takes death and destruction to effect positive change. How many communities have repeatedly complained to their community leaders about needed traffic signals without response? In addition, what usually forces these leaders to erect the traffic signals? Usually by innocent people forfeiting their lives. The fire service is no different. In review of the fire service and the stringent fire codes that have evolved, the ultimate sacrifice was made before stricter codes came into existence.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, publishers of *FIRE in the United States 1985-1994* recognized this problem by stating:

Fire kills thousands of Americans each year, injures hundreds of thousands, destroys billions of dollars in property, and cost tens of billions of dollars overall, but mayors and city managers, school officials, the media, and the general public still are

largely unaware of the magnitude of these numbers. Their lack of awareness and failure to realize the seriousness of fire to communities and the country are factors in keeping the U.S. fire problem one of the worst in the world per capita (p. 1).

The United States Fire Administration goes on further to report, "because fire is ranked as the fifth leading cause of accidental death" (p.31), and "71% occur in residents" (p.3), it is quite evident why ENFC&RD needs to do more in the planning and prevention of these tragedies. ENFC&RD, like most fire departments, clearly identify its mission in a published mission statement. The first priority in the mission statement is *to prevent fires*. Performing a pre-defined survey for multi-family dwellings supports this mission priority. Harold Richman (1986) believes, "The ultimate goal in company inspections is to know the problems in every potential fire structure in a company's response area, and applying these ideas in the form of a survey" (p.29). Richman goes on further to state, "Structures that must be examined individually and in detail, are those that are unusual in some respect" (p.29). Examples of some of these buildings in ENFC&RD response area are those that

- Have unusually high occupancy levels
- Are served by low or diminished water supply
- Are difficult to gain access by apparatus
- Have unusual structure layouts

Planning for a tragedy is not a popular topic with the public. Ask any Florida resident prior to 1998 that have relocated from another state about brush fires and their danger. Their answer would have been, "What's to worry, we went through brush fires up north without a problem." Ask the same question today and chances are those same people will have a whole new perspective, largely due

to the Florida wild fires that consumed 499,477 acres of land and burnt 371 structures (Florida Department of Agriculture, 1998).

As a tool for developing a survey the author used data from the Division of State Fire Marshal, Florida Fire Incident Reporting System, National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), and personal interviews.

As part of the literary review, the author conducted a personal interview with 22-year veteran ENFC&RD Fire Marshal Gayland Moore. The interview was conducted in an office setting on December 15, 1998. The first question asked of Chief Moore was; "What are the legal ramifications of line personnel conducting inspections using a survey?" Chief Moore advised that as long as the personnel were properly training to the level at which they were expected to perform, there would not be any issues. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), *National Fire Codes* 1-3.2 (1993) state, "The job performance requirements for each level of progression as a fire inspector shall be completed in accordance with recognized practices and procedures or as defined by law or the authority having jurisdiction" (p.1031.5). Furthermore *Florida State Statutes* 633.081 (1995) declares:

A firefighter certified pursuant to s. 633.35 may conduct firesafety inspections, under the supervision of a certified firesafety inspector, while on duty as a member of a fire department company conducting in-service firesafety inspections without being certified as a firesafety inspector, if such firefighter has satisfactorily completed an in-service fire department company inspector training program of at least 24 hours duration as provided by the Department of Insurance (p.666).

This information is useful in "removing any obstacles to the new vision" (p.sm 4-12) as was taught at the NFA's *Strategic Management of Change* (1996). The next question asked of Chief

Moore was "By not performing a survey, what could exist?" Chief Moore explained his most significant fear was that there would be a false sense of security that standpipes and related hardware would be in working order.

Because of the rapid growth rate experienced by ENFC&RD there is no way feasible to annually check these appliances without the help of operations. James C. Robertson (1995) believes "By engine company's performing surveys the firefighter gains knowledge that is helpful in fire suppression" (p.64). Robertson furthers states; "No doubt many firefighters have avoided death and injury because of prefire surveys" (p.66).

To increase or even maintain the level of service ENFC&RD provides its customers, company surveys must be implemented. To provide this higher level the author identified crucial elements of the survey. The first priority is accessibility to the building and its inhabitants. Ulysses Seal (1993) believes "Accessibility to the site and to the building, to include, exits, build in fire protection [sic], water supply, type of occupancy and it's hazards [sic], and the type of construction, are all important factors when performing a pre incident survey" (p.8). Additional elements of the survey should include common fire safety components such as fire protection systems and storage practices. Jack Murphy (1996) states, "A fire inspection should include checking means of egress, fire protection systems, heating systems, electrical systems, and storage practices" (p.91). Training new firefighters in basic inspection practices emphasizes that the knowledge gained by pre-incident surveys provide needed information in building construction, building layout, special processes, fire notification and suppression features, and occupancy concerns.

The following inspection information is taught to firefighters in *Essentials of Fire Fighting* (1998):

- Become familiar with area structures, their uses, and their associated hazards.
- Visualize how existing strategies apply to the occupancies.

- Recognize hazards.
- Aid citizens with fire prevention and life safety endeavors.
- Gain valuable on-site information for pre-incident planning (p.662).

Essentials of Fire Fighting (1998) also instructs the new firefighter to note the location of hydrants, standpipe, and sprinkler locations.

Additional information should include: (a) address numbers sufficiently visible, (b) be sure all sides of the building are accessible, (c) make certain natural cover encroachment are not a threat, (d) address any forcible entry problems posed by barred windows or high-security doors, (e) check overhead obstructions or other deterrents that would restrict emergency operations (p.663).

By obtaining a better knowledge of the tools and training needed to spot these hazards, a more valuable survey will be produced, which ultimately will result in saving lives and property, as well as fire fighters safety.

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

The desired outcome of this research was to create a survey for use on multi-family structures by suppression personnel (See Appendix A.). A force field analysis was utilized in examining the forces for and against the results of this research. The planning phase involved developing a vision (of the change), defining the goals and objectives, and identifying the forces that could impede the change. Informational techniques were applied in an attempt to promote the proposed survey. The procedure included the use of historical research in the form of a literature review. The data was based on training material gathered from multiple references and on the experience and advice of fire officials.

The research was action research in that the information gathered through historical research was applied to the actual, real-life problem of not having a survey for multi-family structures.

Assumptions and Limitations

Research endeavors were limited by two major areas. The first limitation was that pre-incident surveys are not being conducted by other like-sized fire departments in a 50-mile radius of ENFC&RD. A total of 15 departments were polled, only to find out that 10 departments used an inspection form or pre-fire plan, however none used any form of a survey. All departments polled did however utilize a fire prevention division and the engine company to perform all annual inspections.

The second limitation was labors reluctance to perform the survey. After scheduling a meeting with each shift, it was determined that their concerns had to be addressed. Items of concern were legal issues, time and training from an already hectic schedule to perform the survey, and what was to become of the information once it was gathered. To address these concerns the author utilized techniques taught by the NFA in *Strategic Management of Change* (1996). "It is often difficult for organizations and their officers to move beyond established comfort zone grounded in what has been done in the past" (p.sm 3-3). This unit revealed that in order to accomplish the change process, the change needed to be tailored to the organization's needs.

RESULTS

The object of this research project is to develop a survey to be used on multi-family structures by suppression personnel. A sample survey for the use by suppression personnel is shown in Appendix A.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1. The principle factor in developing a survey is to determine the essential components. "Elements of a command or tactical pre-plan would include life hazard to both civilian and firefighter" (Seal, 1993, p.9). Seal (1993) goes on to explain that accessibility to the site and buildings, accessibility of exits for both occupants and firefighters are all factors in determining what information is needed for a survey. Seal (1993) goes on further to explain that too much information can make a survey too complicated and less effective to the user. After gathering criteria used in pre-existing inspection forms, utilized by ENFC&RD inspectors, it was determined that a quick and easy form had to be conceived. The following information is the results of data collected, literary review, and personal interviews (See Appendix A.):

- Fire department connection not visible or obstructed
- Fire department connection missing caps
- Unable to access fire protection equipment
- Fire alarm not inspected and tagged within 12 months
- Obvious electrical deficiencies
- Unsafe storage practices
- Sprinkler system not inspected within 12 months
- Water supply not obstructed

Further particulars elaborated the inception of (a) fire extinguishers, (b) exit signs, (c) emergency lighting, (d) visible addresses, and (e) exits blocked or obstructed. Carter and Rausch (1989) explain that loss prevention activities are critical to fire protection needs. Understanding the survey enables suppression crews to adequately inspect hundreds of multi-family structures in a short

period of time. This will drastically improve not only awareness levels of suppression personnel, but effectively provide public relations and awareness to the citizens of East Naples.

Once the foundation was established, the survey was distributed to chief officers, as well as lieutenants, to provide feedback. After one weeks time, an unexpected finding resulted. The relative contribution was a suggestion that attention should be focussed on problems prevention was having on complaints of gas grills stored or used in unapproved locations. Because of poor storage practices (of gas grills), the Collier County Fire Marshals Association was instrumental in developing ordinance 98-74 (Board of County Commissioners, 1998). This ordinance prohibits the use or storage of gas grills within 10 feet of any residential building. Data collected using ENFC&RD's complaint form revealed seven complaints in a one-year time frame (ENFC&RD complaint form, 1993). After conferring with Chief Moore, it was decided to incorporate into the survey provisions on examining the use of gas grills.

The following information in *Management in the Fire Service* (1989) describes a survey should contain "only the most valuable information that is not likely to change" (p.204). This information rendered a useful, yet effortless, form for the survey

Research Question 2. On December 15, 1998, calls to 15 like sized (to ENFC&RD) fire departments were made for the purpose of a telephonic survey. Chief officers from each department were asked the identical question; Does your department use any form of a pre-incident survey for multi-family structures? After contacting all departments, the results established that none of the departments utilized a pre-incident survey of the magnitude this research was focusing on. Ten departments used an inspection form or pre-fire plan, however none used any form of a survey. All departments polled did however utilize fire prevention divisions and engine companies that performed annual inspections. In questioning Assistant Chief Ken Rodgers about the use of a pre-

incident survey, his remarks were very inquisitive into the outcome and use of this research (Assistant Chief Ken Rodgers, North Naples Fire Department, personal interview, January 10, 1999).

Research Question 3. By suppression personnel not using this survey a false sense of security is developing, as portrayed by Chief Moore. "There is a false sense of security that the standpipes and related hardware would be in working order" (Moore, personal interview, December 15, 1998). Further analysis shows that hidden, or a non-existent address marking has hampered response times of units responding to call for service (Collier County Sheriff's Office, 1998). Seal (1993) believes that by not performing pre-incident surveys, tactical operations on the fire ground would be jeopardized. Criterion taught to recruit firefighters further emphasizes the use of surveys in the recruit becoming familiar with the building and their surrounding, recognizing hazards, and gaining valuable on-site information (*Essentials of Fire Fighting*, 1998).

Survey Rationale

The results from data collected are organized into four sections based on order of use (See Appendix A.). The first section identifies the complexes name, address, and date in which the survey was taken.

The second section assesses 24 of the most important factors to be utilized in a yes-or-no format.

The third section of the form provides a place for the personnel to input their comments or concerns. These comments can be any unusual factors found, such as factors that weren't addressed in the survey, or factors that need immediate attention.

The forth and final section deals with what personnel performed the survey, and an explanation of re-survey details.

DISCUSSION

The survey, which represents the results of this research, reflects the outcome of data collected, personal interviews, and first-hand knowledge of the tools needed to successfully transmit needed information to suppression personnel.

The survey (See Appendix A.) should be of considerable value to suppression personnel, as well as the fire prevention division. *Fire Inspection and Code Enforcement* (1998) believe that inspections help educate the public "in ways to control hazards, in proper methods of evacuation, and in overall fire safety practices" (p.1). The knowledge that pre-incident surveys provide, greatly improves fire department operations, and substantially improves both firefighter and citizen safety (*Essentials of Fire Fighting*, 1998). It should be the responsibility of every chief officer to integrate all aspects of company inspections into the goals of the department (Carter, & Rausch, 1989). *Fire Inspection and Code Enforcement* believe pre-incident surveys are the single most important activity performed by the fire service. Furthermore, by performing surveys, the engine company's vital role of the firefighter, from the communities perspective, could shift from a negative image to a positive one.

In formulating essential data needed for the survey, it was noticed that labor had a reluctance to perform the surveys. After scheduling a meeting with each shift, it was determined that their concerns were legal issues, time and training from an already hectic schedule, and what was to become of the information once it was gathered. These concerns were addressed one at a time by providing first, the assurance of the legal issues. NFPA *National Fire Codes* 1-3.2 (1993), provides the legal authority, as well as *Florida State Statutes*, 633.081 (1995). The second concern of not having enough time was resolved by adjusting the workday to conform to the needed time. The third concern of what was to become of the information was in all respects the most important

concern expressed. Too often, many projects in the fire service go unfinished due to unforeseen circumstances such as, priorities shifting, budget constraints, and technologies changing. These circumstances lead the personnel into believing that their efforts go unnoticed. Utilization of the information generated by the survey in a manner that personnel could see the product of their labor was a challenge. After meeting with the officers of ENFC&RD, consensus was reached and agreed to employ lap top computers. This concept had numerous rewards for the department as well as the personnel. Lap top computers were acquired for a pilot program of two engines and command vehicle. The information utilized in the computers will be a mapping program, haz-mat information on essential sites, and of course a data base for the surveys. Ulysses S. Seal (1993) reports that computer technology offers many solutions for pre-planning problems. Seal (1993) further states, "Computers offer fast retrieval and almost unlimited information storage. But, remember that the computer system will only be as good as the information you enter into it" (p.9).

The proposed survey is the first of its kind customized for use by the East Naples Fire Control and Rescue District. Selection of evaluation criteria was much influenced by conditions common to ENFC&RD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Formulate and implement department Standard Operating Guidelines for the use and instruction of this survey. Integrate the use of this survey in ENFC&RD's training program. Focus on the uses and limitations of this survey, with special attention in explaining to the public the mission, job duties, and services the department offers.

A time line needs to be established to check on the progress of the survey and any related problems. After taking into account the time allocated, calls for service, and unforeseen

occurrences for implementing the survey, it is realistic to expect 45 surveys per month, per shift can be achieved.

Before instituting the survey program, a 24-hour fire inspectors class needs to be implemented and taught to all personnel. Training needs to focus on building construction, alarm functions, occupancy and its hazards, the type of construction, and storage practices.

As the survey matures and evolves through training, review and revision, the Collier County fire chiefs should consider adopting the survey countywide. Benefits from such standardization would be to both the fire department and the occupants of all multi-family structures in Collier County.

In conclusion, by implementing the survey, the personnel of ENFC&RD will have a better understanding of the multi-family structures in their respective response areas. This will ultimately assist the citizens of East Naples to have a better understanding of fire safety, and the men and women who protect them.

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Appendix A



East Naples Fire Control and Rescue District
4798 Davis Blvd., Naples, FL 34104
(941) 774-7111

**MULTI - FAMILY FIRE SAFETY SURVEY**

COMPLEX NAME: _____

COMPLEX ADDRESS: _____ ZONE: _____

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: _____ PHONE: _____

A routine fire safety survey was conducted at the above mentioned location
on _____. The following deficiencies were noted:

CORRECTED ON (re-survey date) _____

<input type="checkbox"/>	BUILDING ADDRESS NOT VISIBLE FROM THE STREET	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	BUILDING NUMBERS NOT SIX INCHES IN SIZE	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION NOT VISIBLE OR OBSTRUCTED	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION MISSING CAPS	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	BUILDING NOT EQUIPPED WITH ENFD KEY BOX (recommendation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	KEY BOX NOT EQUIPPED WITH PROPER KEYS	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	UNABLE TO ACCESS FIRE PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FIRE ALARM NOT INSPECTED AND TAGGED WITHIN 12 MOS.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	OBVIOUS ELECTRICAL DEFICIENCIES	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	STORAGE WITHIN 36" OF PANELS (ELEC/ALARM/OTHER)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	UNSAFE STORAGE PRACTICES IN EQUIPMENT ROOM	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	SPRINKLER SYSTEM NOT INSPECTED AND TAGGED WITHIN 12 MOS.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	SPRINKLER FDC NOT LABELED "AUTO SPRK"	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	STANDPIPE NOT INSPECTED AND TAGGED WITHIN 5 YRS	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	STANDPIPE VALVES OR OTHER ACCESSORIES DEFICIENT	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FIRE EXTINGUISHER NOT VISIBLE OR INACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FIRE EXTINGUISHER NOT INSPECTED AND TAGGED WITHIN 12 MOS.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FIRE EXTINGUISHER CABINET MISSING HAMMERS	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	EXIT SIGN NOT ILLUMINATED	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	EMERGENCY LIGHTING INOPERATIVE	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	EXIT AISLES, STAIRS OR LANDINGS OBSTRUCTED OR CONGESTED	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	NAME OF MANAGEMENT COMPANY NOT POSTED (recommendation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	LP GAS GRILLS STORED OR USED IN UNAPPROVED LOCATION	<input type="checkbox"/>

PREVIOUS NOTED VIOLATIONS CORRECTED ☐

COMMENTS: _____

A re-survey will be conducted in approximately 30 days. The correction of these hazards will be checked off on the right side of this form during the re-survey and a copy will be mailed to you. Your co-operation in the elimination of these hazards are appreciated by all. Thank - you!

Survey performed by: _____

shift _____ number of stories: _____ number of units: _____
personnel on survey: _____ date mailed: _____